

Exhibit No. 4Date 3-29-07Bill No. 143117

Russell Elementary School

227 W. Nevada Street, Kalispell, MT 59901

406-751-3900 / fax: 406-751-3905

Darren Schlepp, Principal

schleppd@sd5.k12.mt.us

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this in strong support of the Newborn Hearing Screening Bill (HB/17). I am a Speech Pathologist who has worked with hearing-impaired and deaf individuals, infants through adult, for thirty years. My primary employment is with the Kalispell School District, but I also serve as a parent-infant advisor for MSDB, as well as providing private practice speech therapy to hearing-impaired and deaf children.

As a parent-infant advisor, I have worked with children diagnosed at birth or shortly thereafter, and I have worked with other children who were not diagnosed until three or four years of age. The children who are diagnosed and fitted with amplification later are at a significant disadvantage. They have missed a major part of the "critical language learning" years, (to age 6-7) and lag behind significantly with their auditory skills. Because of this, these children most often require intensive intervention, and must access a significant number of Special Education supports once they are enrolled in a public school. The costs can be dramatic.

Please support HB 17. Every child should have the right to hear and communicate.

Respectfully,

Virginia Paulson, M.S.

Speech/Language Pathologist